



# Kykeon

**Kykeon** (Ancient Greek: κυκεών, *kykeôn*; from κυκάω, *kykáō*; "to stir, to mix") was an Ancient Greek drink of varied description. Some were made of water, barley and naturally occurring substances. Others were made with wine and grated cheese.<sup>[1]</sup> It is widely believed that kykeon refers to a psychoactive brew, as in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries.<sup>[2]</sup> A kykeon was used at the climax of the Eleusinian Mysteries to break a sacred fast, but it is also mentioned as a favourite drink of Greek peasants.

## Ancient sources and description

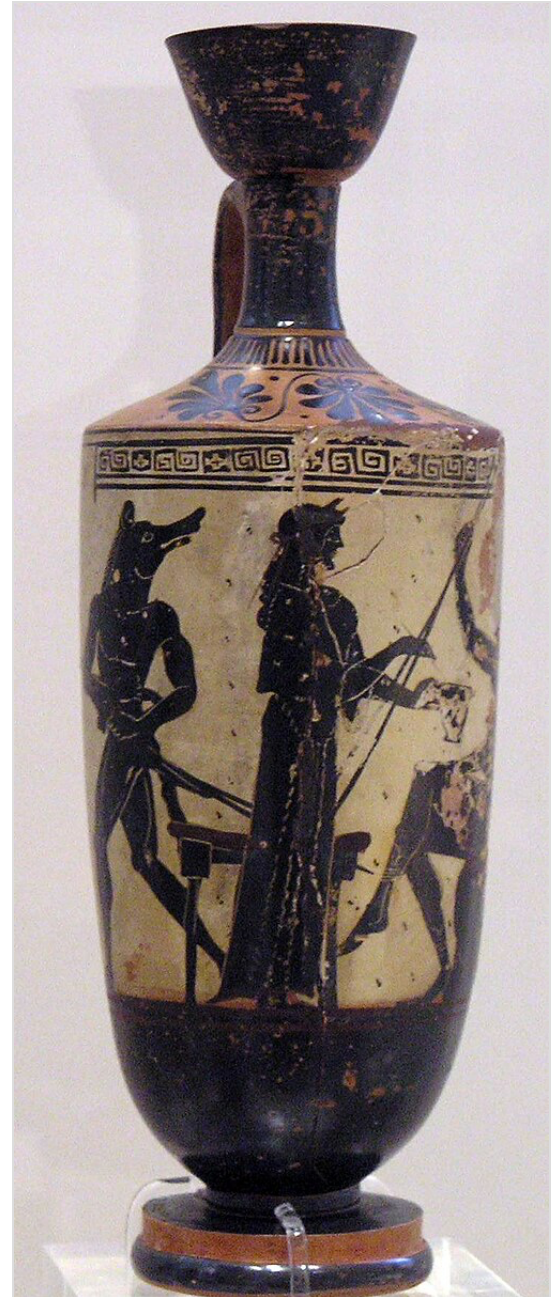
Kykeon is mentioned in Homeric texts: the Iliad describes it as consisting of Pramnian wine, barley, and grated goat's cheese.<sup>[3]</sup> In the Odyssey, Circe adds some honey and pours her magic potion into it.<sup>[4]</sup> In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the goddess refuses red wine but accepts kykeon made from water, barley, and pennyroyal.<sup>[5]</sup>

It was supposed to have digestive properties: In Aristophanes' Peace Hermes recommends it to the hero who ate too much dry fruit and nuts.<sup>[6]</sup>

Aristocrats shunned it as a peasant drink: Theophrastus' Characters depicts a peasant who goes to the Ecclesia drunk with kykeon.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Eleusinian Mysteries

In an attempt to solve the mystery of how so many people over the span of two millennia could have consistently experienced revelatory states during the culminating ceremony of the Eleusinian Mysteries, it has been posited



Circe and Odysseus, white-ground lekythos by the Athena Painter, ca. 490–480 BC. From Eretria National Archaeological Museum in Athens, 1133.

that the barley used in the Eleusinian kykeon was parasitized by ergot, and that the psychoactive properties of that fungus triggered the intense experiences alluded to by the participants at Eleusis.<sup>[8][2]</sup>

Discovery of fragments of ergot (fungi containing LSD-like psychedelic alkaloids) in a temple dedicated to the two Eleusinian goddesses excavated at the Mas Castellar site (Girona, Spain) provided some possible support for this theory. Ergot fragments were found inside a vase and within the dental calculus of a 25-year-old man, providing evidence of ergot being consumed.<sup>[9]</sup> This finding seems to support the hypothesis of ergot as an ingredient of the Eleusinian kykeon.

## See also

---

- Ancient Greece and wine
- Ancient Greek cuisine

## References

---

1. Guthrie, W. K. C. (1978). *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Vol. 1. Cambridge University Press. p. 449.
2. González Wagner, Carlos (1984). *Psicoactivos, misticismo y religión en el mundo antiguo*. Complutense University of Madrid.
3. Homer. *Iliad*. XI, 638–641.
4. Homer. *Odyssey*. X, 234.
5. "Homeric Hymn to Demeter". *Homeric Hymns*. 210.
6. Aristophanes. *Peace* (play). v. 712.
7. Theophrastus. *Characters*. IV, 2–3.
8. "Mixing the *Kykeon*" (<http://www.psychedelic-library.org/Mixing%20the%20Kykeon%20Final%20Draft.pdf>) (PDF). *Eleusis: Journal of Psychoactive Plants and Compounds*. New Series. **4**. 2000.
9. Juan-Stresserras, J. , & Matamala, J. C. (2005). Estudio de residuos microscópicos y compuestos orgánicos en utillaje de molido y de contenido de las vasijas [A study of the microscopic residue and organic compounds in grinding tools and jar contents]. In P. Bueno, R. Balbín, & R. Barroso (cur.), *El dolmen de Toledo* (pp. 235–241). Alcalá de Henares, Spain: Universidad de Alcalá.

## Bibliography

---

- Wasson, R.G.; Hofmann, A.; Ruck, C. *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the*

*Mysteries*. — author A. Hofmann is the inventor of LSD

- Delatte, Armand (1955). *Le Cycéon, breuvage rituel des mystères d'Éleusis* (in French). Paris: Belles Lettres.

## External links

---

- "Has the mystery of the Eleusinian mysteries been solved?" (<http://www.x-sandra.com/valencic/valencic/ivan.htm>).
- 

Retrieved from "<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kykeon&oldid=1286108926>"